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SUBJECT: SA WOLPE IN KINSHASA 1/3: OBJECTIVES AND
INITIATIVES IN THE GREAT LAKES

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Special Advisor for the Great Lakes Howard Wolpe visited Kinshasa November 13-17 as the culmination of his six-country salutatory tour of the region. In his meetings with senior GDRC decision makers, Wolpe outlined the Obama Administration's objectives in Central Africa and proposed next steps in bi- and multilateral confidence-building measures. GDRC officials accepted this approach and the programs, but used each opportunity to press for assistance in developing a capable army under civilian control. This is the first in a series of cables regarding Special Advisor Wolpe's Kinshasa meetings. Septels will report on DRC external relations with Angola and the internal situation in Eastern DRC. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) In meetings with ministers and parliamentary leadership, Wolpe outlined USG objectives in the region as 1) consolidation of the peace, 2) establishment of local and regional economic integration, and 3) strengthening of inter-state cohesion. Wolpe, accompanied by his deputy, Ambassador James Yellin, clarified consolidation of the peace to include addressing the problems of the FDLR and the LRA, eliminating SGBV, and moving toward the next rounds of free elections scheduled for 2010 (local) and 2011 (national). President of the Senate Kengo wa Dondo said a durable peace with economic integration--permitting free movement of persons, goods, and money--required respect for rule of law and the DRC was "the weakest link in the region." Kengo said that army reform in terms of recruitment, training, and promotion, would lead to stability, a precondition for economic growth.

¶3. (SBU) Wolpe proposed regional training initiatives to develop intra-state and inter-state cohesion. The centerpiece of the proposals, building upon success with similar techniques in Burundi and earlier work in the DRC and Liberia, is a week-long regional retreat of thirty-two key security sector players, eight each selected by and from the four respective members of Tripartite Plus. To complement ongoing traditional diplomacy, the Regional Retreat would be designed as a conflict management program in which participants break down communication barriers to allow for trust building, and deepen their collaborative capacity to forge a new and sustainable regional security architecture. Foreign Minister Thambwe Mwamba, Defense Minister Charles Mwando Nsimba, and Minister for International Cooperation Raymond Tshibanda, while emphasizing they could not speak for President Kabila, indicated they saw no reason why Kabila would not approve the program. Thambwe went on to say that he would personally speak to the president and advise him to move quickly on this opportunity. After expressing their support for the program, these leaders explained that the priority for the government is building an army that can protect the borders and maintain internal peace in the face of militias.

¶4. (SBU) A parliamentary joint training retreat forms the second pillar of developing inter-state cohesion. Wolpe proposed a retreat of 40 parliamentarians, 20 each from Rwanda and the DRC. In a meeting with parliamentary leadership led by President of the National Assembly Evariste Boshab, Wolpe said while in Kigali he had obtained support for the initiative from Rose Mukantabana, President of the Rwandan Chamber of Deputies. Boshab said he was in contact via telephone with Mukantabana and he also supports the retreat idea in general terms. Speaking for the opposition, MP Thomas Luhaka, vice president of the MLC party, lent his support to the exchange and spoke of his positive experience as a participant in a similar program developed by Wolpe. Majority caucus president MP Gerard Nkulu Mwenze likewise expressed his support for the program and, notably, his surprise at Wolpe's positive message, which was in stark contrast to the usual foreign delegations which arrive only to "level charges." In a separate meeting, Prime Minister Adolphe Muzito said the program should be expanded to include new political leadership and MPs after the elections.

¶5. (SBU) After expressing support for Wolpe's parliamentary retreat proposal, Luhaka spoke of the need for USG help in building a "republican army" that would lead to security especially in the East. Nkulu added that "a trained army is the solution to international banditry in the East and petty warlords who break the peace." Boshab summarized the thoughts of the parliament: "When it comes to security of the country, there is no majority or opposition--only one team."

* Missing Section 002 *
